



MAY 21 2014

Dear Reviewer:

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), we enclose for your review the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) *Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS) for the Management of the subsistence harvest of northern fur seals on St. George Island, Alaska.*

St. George Island is a remote island located in the Bering Sea. St. George Island residents have a need for long-term sustainable use of northern fur seals for subsistence purposes of cultural continuity, food, clothing, arts, and crafts. The subsistence way of life has remained an important, consistent, and supporting factor in the personal, economic, and traditional character of St. George. A continued subsistence harvest preserves the traditional skills, cultural values, and knowledge, provides a traditional food source for Alaska Native residents, and enables the passing of tradition on to younger hunters.

This DSEIS is prepared pursuant to NEPA to assess the environmental impacts associated with NOAA proceeding with proposed changes in the management of the northern fur seal subsistence harvest on St. George Island, Alaska to allow for a regulated harvest of male northern fur seals to meet the subsistence needs and implement new conservation controls. This DSEIS supplements the 2005 Final Environmental Impact Statement for Setting the Annual Subsistence Harvest of Northern Fur Seals on the Pribilof Islands. NMFS decided to prepare this DSEIS because the proposed action makes substantial changes to the action analyzed in the 2005 EIS that are relevant to the environmental effects. While this new proposed action does not change the northern fur seal take ranges, it would allow the limited subsistence take of male young of the year and change when and where the subsistence harvests can occur on St. George Island. Therefore, this DSEIS focuses on analyzing the impacts of subsistence take of male young of the year, and expanding when and where the subsistence harvests can occur on St. George Island.

This document is available on the National Marine Fisheries Service Alaska Region website at: <http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/protectedresources/seals/fur.htm> or at www.regulations.gov after entering docket number "NOAA-NMFS2014-0025" in the search bar.

Written comments on the DSEIS should be directed to the responsible official identified below by July 14, 2014. Written comments may also be submitted electronically to the www.regulations.gov portal.



Responsible Official:

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Sincerely,



Patricia A. Montanio
NOAA NEPA Coordinator

Enclosure